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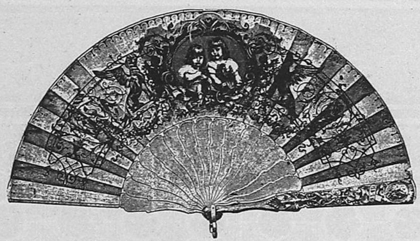
THE WASH STAND.

FOR many years there was but little change or improvement in the general style of wash stands, but of late there are many unique and in some cases rather startling innovations upon the established fashion of this most necessary toilet convenience. Among the newest of these inventions is a wash stand that may be covered over and serve as a writing desk. Just how popular this may become, it is difficult to say. There are many things that might interfere with its successful use, and tend to make its general introduction somewhat doubtful.

In the first place the odor of soapy water is almost intolerable to some fastidious persons, and after such water has been standing for a short time it is positively offensive to nearly every one. In those stands that we have seen, the receptacle for the suds is made of zinc, and this is not long in becoming permeated with a sour, disagreeable smell, that makes comfort in its vicinity quite out of the question. A receiving vessel of earthen ware, would be every way more desirable, and even with this there must be constant vigilance lest the proper cleansing of the tank is neglected.

It may be questioned whether there is not a good deal of risk in the use of such articles while servants are so careless and the ventilation of our homes is so imperfectly attended to. Of course, when properly cleaned and cared for, these stands are very convenient, but it must not be forgotton, that stagnant water, even if it stands but a few hours, is productive of grave disorders in the systems of susceptible persons. If the tank could be emptied and cleansed immediately on its use, all would be well, but this is just what the arrangement aims to avoid.

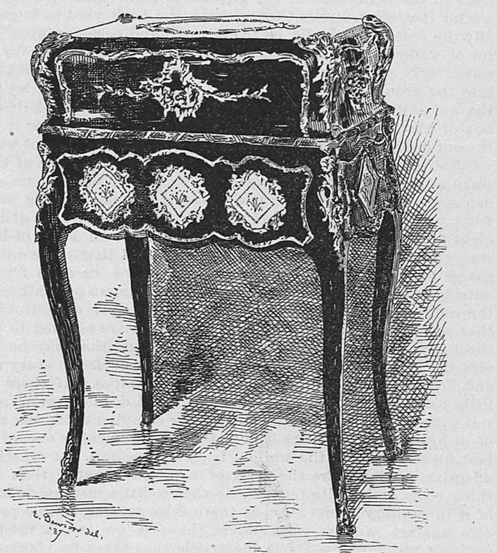
It may be doubted whether the stationary wash stand has many more dangers lurking about it than these so-called sanitary wash stands.



The fact has at last become established, probably to the satisfaction of many who have investigated it, that sewer gas has by far less direct connection with diphtheria and kindred diseases than we have been led to suppose, and that the presence or absence of appliances connecting with the sewers has less relation to the cause or continuance of such diseases, than sanitarians would have us believe. This being a fact, it would seem that there were arguments enough in favor of the stationary wash stand to insure its adoption by every family and individual wherever there is a sufficient water supply to warrant its use. There is but little doubt that the very general impression that sewer gas and diphtheria are cause and effect, has its origin more in the minds of the plumbers than anywhere else, and has for its object their own enrichment more than a friendly concern for the health of the population.

The stationary wash stand has all of the elements of common sense, cleanliness and health if properly put up, and even fairly well managed. If there is disease in the household and bad odors abound, look for the cause in the walls or floors where leaky faucets have been allowed for years to drip just enough water to keep the place in a condition of perpetual mustiness.

In a very handsome house in a neighboring city some years ago there were several cases of fever, a confirmed rheumatic invalid, and a number of cases of sore throat, "threatened with diphtheria," so the physician said, and "prevented only by very thorough treatment." There was an outcry against the stationary wash stands with which the rooms were supplied. Several persons insisted that they smelled sewer gas, and all agreed that there was certainly an unpleasant odor all through the house. At last an experienced physician was called in who at once insisted upon an examination of the water pipes, declaring it as his belief that there was a large amount of wet and decaying wood somewhere about the place. Upon making search a wash stand on the upper floor was found to have a leaky faucet. The marble had settled a little toward the back, and the water in an almost imperceptible stream was constantly trickling down the wall behind the stand and through between the casings and plaster until it reached the ground. The house was an English basement and had an extension under which was the cellar. The main part where the trouble was had no cellar, the floor being but about three feet above the ground. The water had so soaked one of the sills on which the middle partitions rested that the rotted wood could be scraped off with a common table knife to the depth of three or four inches, and the ground was sodden with moisture. Sulphurous acid in quantities was scattered over the ground, the decayed wood removed and new pieces bolted to the sill, the floor renewed, the walls put through a regular process of disinfection as though there had been a contagious disease in the place, and a single rubber washer put into the faucet thus preventing all further trouble. The marble slab was raised to a level, and after a few days there was a notable improvement in the health of the tenants and a conspicuous absence of all musty and disagreeable odors. There had been a good deal of comment about the dangers of sewer gas, and the physicians at first called in had unanimously agreed that bad plumbing was the cause of the difficulty, but it was merely the absence of a small washer that did all of the harm. There is little question but that ordinarily good plumbing with due care for ventilation and cleanliness, will make stationary wash stands and bath rooms perfectly safe for even the most susceptible persons, provided all traps have roof ventilation. There is only one drawback to the use of these conveniences and that is the mistaken policy of boards of public works as regards the water supply. This should be so abundant that streets and sewers could be thoroughly washed. The authorities should insist on a plentiful water supply in all tenement houses especially, and that the waste pipes are washed every day. Such a course would cost less than hospitals and sanitary boards, and all danger from such diseases as are induced or aggravated by the accumulation of foul air in sewer pipes would be avoided. In localities where there is no water supply through pipes, the stationary wash stand has been used with good results by running a small pipe down through the walls to some convenient point and conducting the waste water into a barrel or tub to be thrown away daily. Into this tub a little chloride of lime, carbolic acid, sulphurous acid or other germicide or disinfectant may be put every day, and all danger of unpleasant odors be avoided. It is hard work to carry clear water up stairs, and if any is spilled it is unpleasant enough, but to carry waste water down stairs is quite as hard work and the upsetting of a pailful is oftentimes most annoying. With a little care one-half of this labor may be saved and the air of the house be in a perfectly pure condition. Let a small sink be put upon every floor with this waste pipe leading to some entirely open receptacle. It is the merest nonsense that this cannot be done without detriment to the health.



In a western country district a farmer who took some interest in labor saving arrangements for the family, built his house with waste pipes and wash bowls in several of the sleeping rooms of the house. The pipes all led into one larger pipe, and that to a barrel just outside of the kitchen door in the wood shed. From the bottom of this barrel an iron pipe led through the ground about fifty feet down an incline, coming to the surface in a hillside that was sandy, full of stones, and with a soil absolutely worthless as far as productiveness was concerned. All of the waste water passed through this pipe and out upon the unproductive soil. A quart of fresh lime was thrown into the barrel every night, the barrel was then rinsed out and left over night empty. In winter the ice would be from five to ten feet thick in the level below the hillside, melting away with the first spring sunshine. From an unproductive waste the hill gradually began to grow rank grass and weeds until the farmer dug up his pipes and laid them nearly two hundred feet in another direction to reclaim another piece of unprofitable land, turning his waste hillside into a vineyard, one of the best in his locality. The wash stand and laundry water problem is so thoroughly solved in that section of the country that there are no sloppy back yards or ill-smelling kitchen sinks among the more thrifty farmers.

There is a little expense attending the putting in of sinks, wash bowls and wastepipes, but the gain in time saved and health insured by having all waste water conducted to a safe distance from the house and cast upon the earth absolutely disinfected by the lime is so great, that the wonder is that more people do not make use of such simple provisions for health and comfort. In small towns, this waste water conducted through a rubber hose upon the garden or lawn would amply repay all of the trouble it costs in the luxuriance of the growth of vegetation. During the winter if waste water is thrown upon the back yard as is generally the case, lime should be freely used, and occasionally a pailful of water with a little carbolic acid, or concentrated lye dissolved in it, should be thrown over the spot. Out of door sinks set into the ground should have careful attention. On wash day heat the waste water and suds to a boiling point, dissolve half of a box of concentrated lye in a pailful of the suds and pour it into the out-door sink, following it with the remainder of the hot water.

Nothing but convenience can be urged in favor of these sinks as they are usually constructed. When there is no garden space or place to use waste water, a pit may be dug in the front yard as near the street as possible. It should be at least eight feet deep and as wide as its depth. Several loads of large stones should be put into the bottom so laid that there will be spaces between them. Smaller stones may be used to fill the outside spaces and coarse gravel and sand thrown over all. Into the center of this the drain pipe may run. If care is taken that no kitchen scraps or particles of food are allowed to pass through the pipes, a fairly good sanitary condition may be preserved. To do this there should be strainers from every sink and bowl so that nothing can lodge in the pipes. If there is a little pains taken to pour disinfectants and deodorizers into the sinks, there will be very little cause for complaint on the score of ill health from bad drainage. Sulphurous acid is one of the best disinfectants in the world. It is cheap, and not especially offensive, having more the odor of a sulphur match than anything else. It is quite remarkable that so little mention is made of it in sanitary literature. If there is an unconquerable prejudice against sanitary wash stands, there is no less a need of untiring watchfulness about the article that takes its place. On no account should a tin vessel be used as a receptacle for waste water. Give it what care you may it is unwholesome and ill-smelling. A china jar is the only proper article for such a purpose and this must have regular and thorough cleansing. All toilet articles should be constantly looked after. We have seen the soap and brush dishes in the most deplorable condition, the bowl and pitcher spattered and dusty outside and not over clean within, a thick coating of "settlings" at the bottom of the pitcher, together with various foreign objects not in the least inviting to a fastidious taste, and suggesting the mental inquiry at least, whether one would feel especially clean after an ablution with such provision for its taking.

There are many attractive styles in the regular old-fashioned wash stands. Those with marble tops should have thick mats on which to set the various toilet articles, partly because there is offense to the nerves in the noise of placing china articles down upon bare marble, and partly because there is less danger of breakage if such mats are provided. Many stands have rods across the ends for towels but they are scarcely worth using for such purposes. A towel-rack or stand costs but little, and is much more convenient. There should always be an abundance of towels. They are an evidence of civilization and even if they are smoothed out and folded away without ironing they are clean and repay the labor. There are iron skeleton wash stands that are light and convenient. They have metal basin, water pitcher, and waste water bucket. The latter should never be allowed to stand in a sleeping room. Substitute a pail of agate ware, or a china jar. For kitchen use such wash stands are admirable.